Get Your March Starts at Our New Early Spring Plant Sale

Laura Niemi, Garden Programs Manager

This spring, Seattle Tilth will be holding our first ever Early Spring Edible Plant Sale—coming soon, on March 20—which will be in addition to our regular sale the first weekend of May. We intend to help you and all the new gardeners get an early start on growing your own food.

Seattle citizens are committed to local food, with more people planting gardens every year, and Seattle Tilth wants to support this trend by encouraging people to plant early and grow organic food year round. Sales at this event will help fund our programs to teach people how to grow food, compost, conserve natural resources and build a healthy urban environment.

The sale will be a great opportunity for gardeners to learn about the myriad delicious veggies and fruits you can plant in March. We will have salad greens, Asian vegetables, broccoli and other cole crops, as well as unique and beautiful edible peas.

By planting starts, you get a jump on the season and can harvest earlier. Spinach, lettuce, broccoli raab and other short-season crops will be grown, harvested and cleared to make room for your summer tomatoes and peppers. Plants that need more time to mature, like cabbage or cauliflower, will be harvested in early to mid-summer, just in time to plant carrots or beets to eat in the fall and winter.

Another exciting aspect of the Early Spring Edible Plant Sale is the edible perennials. We hear from gardeners all the time

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Grandma’s Wisdom Guides My Gardening

Melissa Brown, Garden Intern

My Grandma Shirley knows to plant peas on Washington’s birthday, put the potatoes in the ground on St. Patrick’s Day, and be sure to put the rest of the garden in by Mother’s Day. These timings are short-hand wisdom passed down to her by her grandfather, an avid local organic gardener, as reminders of the cycles essential to the garden in our unique Maritime Northwest climate.

This wisdom is not just mysterious legend based on holidays, nor is it relegated only to my family. Early spring planting is traditional in the Maritime Northwest because of the seasonal warming we usually experience starting in mid-February; the top few inches of soil warm during the day to around 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit, an acceptable temperature for some spring seed germination. As a newbie gardener, I listen to my grandmother’s wisdom and I back that up with information from the Maritime Northwest Garden Guide and the Comprehensive Organic Gardener course at Seattle Tilth. If I get stuck, I can also call the Garden Hotline.

On Washington’s birthday, the third Monday in February, I will go out into my garden and test the soil for workability. One of the ubiquitous characteristics of spring in the Northwest is rain. If the ground is too wet, working the soil will cause compaction. To test soil wetness, I will dig down to about six inches in my planting bed, make a ping-pong sized ball of soil and compress it in my palm, then toss the ball about six inches into the air and let it hit my palm. If the soil

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Stay Out of Trouble by Volunteering

Liza Burke, Outreach Coordinator

Recently a volunteer mentioned to me that she volunteers because it “keeps her out of trouble.” This might be your motive for volunteering, too! Or, you might be seeking job skills, gardening experience, social opportunities, a way to contribute to the community, service, character building, exercise or recreation.

Seattle Tilth offers many ways for you to meet your goals as a volunteer, and we rely upon the outstanding work of our dedicated volunteers.

Here are just a few ongoing opportunities:

- Garden Crew. Garden or help coordinate efforts at our community learning gardens in north, central, and south Seattle or in Issaquah.
- Outreach Ambassador. Attend events in Seattle or Issaquah.
- Children’s Garden Internship. Three, six and nine month unpaid internships are available; see the internship application on our website.

Share Your Garden Stories In Our Newsletter Profiles

This year, Way to Grow will be featuring interesting people from the Seattle Tilth community. In fact, people just like you! We want to hear from you.

We are looking for stories about members of all ages and backgrounds who have unique experiences or perspectives to share. Tell us about the way your garden excites or inspires you, the creative ways you are conserving resources, your adventures raising urban livestock or how your community is supporting local food systems.

Too shy to nominate yourself? Recommend someone you know who deserves the spotlight! Contact Jessica Heiman at jessicaheiman@seattletilth.org to tell us about yourself or a gardening friend.

Grandma’s Wisdom Guides My Gardening

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Peas are not the only early spring crop to plant; my other favorites are Rustic Arugula, Bloomsdale Spinach, and Easter Egg Radishes. By utilizing the heritage information passed down in my family combined with the seasonal tips available through Seattle Tilth and other gardening resources, I’m getting a great head-start on the growing season!

Call for Volunteers:

Early Spring Edible Plant Sale!

We need many volunteers to make our new March 20 sale a success!

- Before: distribute fliers/posters, organize plants, make signs
- During: event set-up and break-down, sell plants, write tickets, cashier

Volunteers get free entry to the pre-sale. To sign up, click on Events at www.seattletilth.org.

- Events Volunteer. Help with our Early Spring Edible Plant Sale (March 20), Edible Plant Sale (May 1 & 2), Chicken Coop Tour (July 10), and Harvest Fair (Sept. 11).

To get started, please fill out a volunteer application on our Website (www.seattletilth.org/get-involved/volunteer) and attend a Volunteer Orientation, held the first Tuesday of every month.

Seattle Tilth inspires and educates people to garden organically, conserve natural resources, and support local food systems in order to cultivate a healthy urban environment and community.
who want to plant shrubs and trees that are both ornamental and edible, and many people are interested in growing food that requires less resources than a classic vegetable garden. We've selected our favorite edible perennials, both common and unusual, and will have them for sale. Have you grown boysenberry, tayberry, goumi, figs or mulberry before? We'll have educational presentations to help you incorporate them into your landscape, as well as other early spring gardening tips.

Though this is our first year, we hope the sale will be wildly popular. In anticipation, we will be trialing a new staggered entry system that will prevent overcrowding in the sale and minimize the amount of time spent in line. We will give out wristbands Saturday morning that will correspond with a specified entry time. If this plan works as well as we expect, we will implement it for our large annual Edible Plant Sale on May 1 and 2 in Wallingford.

For those who want to shop early with the best selection, we will hold a Pre-Sale on Friday, March 19, 5:30-7 p.m. You can purchase tickets for $25 or you can volunteer and get in for free! We will have many volunteer shifts available the week prior to the sale and during the sale, and would greatly appreciate your help. To view all available volunteer shifts, plant lists and updates about this new event, visit our website and click on Events.

Transformative 2009
Set Stage for Great 2010

Justine Dell’Aringa, Board Vice President

I couldn’t be more excited about the direction that Seattle Tilth is headed. When I joined the board a few years ago, the seeds of change were planted, and indeed they have begun to sprout. Last year was an extraordinary one for Seattle Tilth, filled with transformation and significant accomplishment.

We started 2009 with the launch of an updated brand identity symbolizing Seattle Tilth’s renewed commitment to its mission, and we also began the search for a new executive director. The Board of Directors had exceptionally high standards and searched through many qualified candidates before we found the perfect leader for Seattle Tilth. Certainly, one of the biggest milestones of 2009 was the hiring of Andrea Platt Dwyer. In less than a year, Andrea has proven to be an excellent leader. Her experience and vision has reinvigorated the board and staff, and we’re all very excited to be working with her!

In the fall of 2009, the board approved a strategic plan outlining a path of sustainable growth for Seattle Tilth. Our programs continue to be more popular than ever, and the board and staff are committed to making our high quality educational programs accessible to everyone in the community. Last year saw the beginning of increased offerings of our programs with the addition of a fifth teaching garden, this one in South Seattle.

We’re kicking off the new year with an early plant sale in March, a garden and booth at the Northwest Flower and Garden Show and new classes, and there is much more on the horizon. Stop by the Tilth booth at one of our upcoming events to find out more and to let us know what you think. We’d love to hear from you!
Issaquah Garden Turns Two, Growing Like a Weed

Sarah Cassidy

Seattle Tilth’s newest Demonstration Garden turned two last fall! And like any healthy two-year-old, Tilth’s young garden at Pickering Barn in Issaquah grew like a weed, made lots of new friends and was lucky enough to have its own village to help tend it!

Some highlights of the 2009 season:

The Children’s Garden classes were well attended and fun-filled. It is fitting that such a young garden gets “broken in” by such young gardeners. By the end of the season, the children had planted a Rainbow Garden, built a Beetle Condominium, had a tea party with poppy teacups and nasturtium leaf saucers, and gleaned little crescent moon-seeds from calendula to sprinkle into their home gardens. They watered and weeded and harvested hosts of strawberries, blueberries, peas and broccoli shoots. And of course, they sprinkled into Tilth’s soil their own brand of fairy dust, the best fertilizer around.

We were visited by adult garden angels too. We had a stalwart volunteer brigade that helped tackle the upkeep of the larger garden environs at Pickering Barn that Seattle Tilth inherited full responsibility of this year. They spread more than five yards of wood chip mulch, weeded the outer beds and pathways, pruned back the ever-burgeoning native plantings, and generally kept the beautiful setting beautiful. THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

Being in our first demonstration garden beyond Seattle has been both exciting and challenging, as our name is not yet a household word like it is in Seattle. Although the word “Tilth” is still a novelty on the Eastside (“Did you make that word up?” one class participant asked last summer), there were glimmers of familiarity within the community. Our awareness is definitely growing.

Among dozens of lovely compliments from passersby that I received last summer as the Tilth garden rep, one stands out: a woman came up to me while I was packing up after a garden class and said, “I have come to this garden for years for its peaceful beauty. And now Seattle Tilth is its steward. It is in good hands.” ‘Tis, I concur!

Get Soil Smart in 2010:

Master Composter/Soil Builder Trainings

Graham Golbuff

MCSB Volunteer Coordinator

Interested in improving the soil in your yard? How about in your neighborhood or throughout the city? If so, consider applying for our 2010 Master Composter/Soil Builder program.

Each year, Seattle Tilth rounds up a group of Seattleites from a variety of backgrounds who are uniquely passionate about caring for the soils of their city. We provide each of them with 30 hours of comprehensive training on an assortment of topics such as advanced backyard composting techniques, introductory soil sciences, solid waste collection specifics (recycling, hazardous materials, organics, etc.), storm water management and home-scale greenhouse gas mitigation.

Following this training, MC/SB volunteers disperse across the city and conduct engaging, helpful and fun educational outreach on these issues. This is the core of the program; MC/SB volunteers love both spreading compost and spreading the compost gospel, and the folks that we interact with love us too!

Our creative volunteers conduct outreach at a variety of venues: community gardens, churches, farmers markets, schools, backyards—even the World Wide Web! (Google “Master Composter Podcast” to find out more...) Volunteers tailor their educational approaches accordingly to meet each unique audience’s specific needs.

New Southeast Program

Seattle Tilth is also excited to announce an MC/SB initiative in southeast Seattle to complement the organization’s commitment to reach and engage diverse communities in the new decade. We will be collaborating with community-based organizations that serve diverse populations and determining the best way to design an MC/SB experience for their constituents. Our research will shape and inform the new program, which we will launch this fall.

The spring training will be held at the Good Shepherd Center on Wednesday evenings (7-9 p.m.) and Saturdays (10 a.m.-3 p.m.) beginning on March 31.

An application to participate in the spring MC/SB program can be found on our website; click on Learn, then on the program’s name. Further program details can be found on our website, or can be answered directly by me at (206) 633-0097 or grahamgolbuff@seattletilth.org.

Please join us to become an advocate for building healthy urban soils this year!
Display Garden to Show Thrift, Ingenuity

Katie Pencke, Demonstration Garden Coordinator

The display garden we have co-created with Northwest Bloom for the Northwest Flower and Garden Show will hopefully bedazzle attendees with inspiring ecological design, beauty and practicality. We've retitled it "A Family's Little Farm in the City," and it is designed to offer ideas that you can adapt to your own home landscape.

The garden evolved during the winter months, as volunteers and Northwest Bloom staff collected donated and loaned materials to piece together the pre-built garden at the Northwest Bloom site in Mill Creek. From there it will be trucked down the highway to the Convention Center for the five days of the show, February 3–7.

We intend the garden to be a tribute to the many mini-farms in various stages of development in Seattle and other cities around the country and the world. The aesthetic is Depression-era thrift and ingenuity meets 21st century peak oil and recession. We imagined that this landscape was created in a collaboration between the adults and children in the family. The result is a place where people are learning how to benefit from natural cycles and forces in an urban setting.

The garden plan above calls out some of the design elements from the garden. Northwest Bloom will be showcasing the design/build services they provide clients, while Seattle Tilth will be showcasing the food production and resource conservation techniques covered in our 2010 programs.

The garden will feature rainwater harvesting techniques in the form of a 300-gallon cistern and a rain garden. We have included examples of soil-building elements, such as food and yard waste composting, a chicken tractor, sheet mulching and eco-turf.

The frame of the family’s outdoor living space is formed from the more permanent elements in the landscape. These include counters made using the gabion technique and filled with broken concrete “urbanite” and recycled brick, a patio of pervious paving flanked by a wood-fired earthen oven, a windbreak and forest planting, and a solar-powered barn structure housing animals and food preparation and preservation equipment.

The southern facing portion of the landscape will house the annual food production demonstration, featuring various materials appropriate for raised-bed construction, use of vertical space, container gardening and season-extension methods. No city farm would be complete without urban livestock, so the garden will also feature miniature dairy goats and chickens.

Seattle Tilth and NW Bloom staff will be at the garden to discuss how you might adapt the design for your home. You can also visit the Tilth booth nearby to get more information about the demonstrated garden techniques, as well as Territorial seeds for early spring planting; favorite heirlooms seeds; a Tilth apron, hat or tote bag; a worm bin and worms; and our favorite gardening books. We will also be selling memberships and signing people up for classes. Visitors to our booth and garden will also have the chance to talk gardening with local writers Marty Wingate, Willi Galloway, and Bill Thorness.

Tilth educators will be on stage too.

“Creepin’ Critters,” a show for kids with puppets and songs, will be on the Sprout Stage on Saturday and Sunday at 1 and 4 p.m. Our talk about favorite tools and supplies, “The Best Garden Helpers,” will be on the DIY stage on Friday at 7 p.m., and we’ll present “Composting Food Waste,” at the DIY stage on Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

We look forward to seeing Tilth members at the Flower and Garden Show! Please visit us at our display garden and retail booth.
Budget Edible Gardening Tips

Willi Galloway

Organic gardeners tend to be thrifty by nature, but gardening on a budget doesn’t need to be an exercise in restraint. Here are a few of my favorite ways to create a really productive kitchen garden without breaking the bank:

Buy Bareroot.
If you’re interested in planting fruit trees, grapes or raspberries, now is the time to buy these plants bareroot. Bareroot plants are simply dormant woody plants that have had most of the soil around their roots removed (hence the name bareroot). They are typically sold for significantly cheaper prices than similar plants grown in containers because bareroot plants cost a lot less to ship. In addition to local nurseries and the upcoming Early Spring Edible Plant Sale (March 20 at Warren G. Magnuson Park in Hangar 30), the marketplace at the Northwest Flower and Garden Show (Feb. 3-7) is a great place to pick up bareroot plants.

Buy Seed in Bulk.
Many seed catalogs, including Territorial and Johnny’s Select Seeds, sell seed in different sized packets. The bigger the packet you buy, the more you save. Get together with a group of friends and order your favorite seeds together and you can save 25 percent or more.

Borrow Rather Than Buy.
When we built our vegetable garden, we borrowed our neighbor’s tiller rather than renting one. If you don’t find what you need in your neighbor’s shed, check out Phinney Neighborhood Association. They have a donation-funded tool library for members that loans out everything from garden forks to hammers.

Participate in a Seed Exchange.
Seed exchanges are a great way to get free seeds and discover new varieties. Online exchanges are becoming popular or you can organize one with friends. When you’re trading seeds just remember to label the packets and mark how old the seeds are.

Find Free Fertilizer.
The Manure Share Program sponsored by the King Conservation District maintains a list with free sources of manure. The list offers everything from rabbit to llama to chicken to horse. All you have to do is call and arrange to pick up the manure.

Willi Galloway is a former member of Seattle Tilth’s Board of Directors. She writes about vegetable gardening and seasonal cooking on her website, www.DigginFood.com.

Join Us at Our Annual Member Meeting and Reunion
Seattle Tilth’s annual meeting will take place on Feb. 17, 6-8:30 p.m. at the Good Shepherd Center in the chapel on the fourth floor. All members are encouraged to attend this important meeting, which will include an informative program about Tilth activities and a wonderful shared dinner.

One of the primary benefits of membership in Seattle Tilth is the right to vote, and the annual meeting is your opportunity to help shape Tilth’s direction and future by exercising your voting privileges. Once again, the meeting will be preceded by a potluck dinner, with all manner of supremely delicious fare shared by our food-loving community. Bring your favorite dish and your tableware and join us for an evening of camaraderie and good cheer!
Membership and Donations

- New Member
- Renewing Member
- New contact information

Name(s) ___________________________________________________
Phone _____________________________________________________
E-mail _____________________________________________________
Address ___________________________________________________
City/State/Zip _________________________________________________

Payment Type  O Check  O Visa  O Mastercard
Card #  ______________________________________  Exp  __________
Name on card  _______________________________________________

Membership Levels
- O $35 Individual
- O $20 Limited Income
- O $60 Family

Donations
- Yes, I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to support Seattle Tilth’s educational programs.
  O My employer matches gifts.
Company name: ________________________________________________

Order the Maritime Northwest Garden Guide
For an indispensable regional guide to year-round gardening, enclose $19.50 (includes tax and postage) per copy.
Please send me _____ copies x $19.50 = $ ________

Total $ ________

Mail to Seattle Tilth, 4649 Sunnyside Ave N, Room 120, Seattle, Washington 98103

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**Soil Test Can Reveal Nutrient, Contaminant Levels**

*Q: My vegetable bed really struggled this year, nothing grew very well. What can I do to make sure the soil is OK?*

A: Getting a soil test may tell you why your garden underperformed. King County residents (except for people living in Issaquah and Federal Way) can take advantage of a free soil test offered by the King Conservation District. Residents can have up to five soil samples tested for “the big three” nutrients (NPK: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium), pH, and a list of micronutrients. The lab will send you recommendations specific to your soil and plant needs.

More information about this program, where and how to take samples can be found at [www.kingcd.org/pub_soil_soilsam.htm](http://www.kingcd.org/pub_soil_soilsam.htm). If you have questions, contact Jason Mirro at the King Conservation District at [jason.mirro@kingcd.org](mailto:jason.mirro@kingcd.org) or (425) 282-1905.

There are other laboratories available that test for contaminants such as lead, arsenic, pesticides, oil or gasoline. There is a charge for testing for contaminants, and the fees vary by lab.

If your garden plot is close to the foundation of a house that was built before 1978, it may have been painted with lead paint that was later scraped or sanded into the nearby soil. If the plot is close to a busy street or if vehicles were parked or repaired on your property in the past, contamination by automobiles may be an issue. Contamination may also be present in soils that were previously covered by decks built with pressure-treated wood.

Call or e-mail The Garden Hotline for a complete listing of labs that test for contaminants.

*Q: I want to prune my own fruit trees this winter. Where can I learn how to do this?*

A: The easiest way to get started is to take a hands-on class, such as Seattle Tilth’s class in our demonstration garden on Feb. 21 or those offered seasonally by City Fruit ([www.cityfruit.org](http://www.cityfruit.org)) and Plant Amnesty ([www.plantamnesty.org](http://www.plantamnesty.org)).

Some online resources can also provide you with useful background information. Great starter information on pruning young trees and mature trees of any type can be found at [www.treesaregood.com](http://www.treesaregood.com) –click on Tree Care Information and scroll down to [Pruning Basics](http://www.treesaregood.com/tree-care/information/). For more specific information, visit [http://maritimefruit.wsu.edu/Pruningbasics.html](http://maritimefruit.wsu.edu/Pruningbasics.html) and [http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/html/pnw/pnw400/](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/html/pnw/pnw400/).

None of these websites stands alone as a comprehensive resource, but you can gain a good understanding by using them in combination.

Pruning fruit trees is a practice that comes with many and varied opinions and techniques. For people who want to deepen their understanding of a wide range of pruning techniques, a fabulous reference book is “American Horticultural Society Pruning & Training” by Christopher Brickell and David Joyce.

Good luck with your learning endeavor, and may your trees bear much fruit!
Gardening Season Starts With Tilth Classes

The days are finally getting longer and another growing season is on its way. Celebrate the return of gardening with a class at Seattle Tilth. From seed-starting to keeping critters, tool sharpening to lawn removal, the choices are plentiful.

Classes are held either at:
• Good Shepherd Center, 4649 Sunnyside Ave. N., in north Seattle (listed as GSC)
• Bradner Gardens Park, 1733 Bradner Place S., in southeast Seattle (BGP)
• St. James Annex, 9421 18th Ave. S.W., at the southern border of West Seattle - NEW! (SJA)
• Pickering Barn, 1730 10th Ave. N.W., Issaquah (PBI)

Lower price listings are exclusively for Seattle Tilth members, higher prices for the general public. Advance registration and payment are required. Class details and registration forms are found on our Web site, www.seattletilth.org under the Learn tab, or can be gained by calling the Tilth office at (206) 633-0451, ext. 101.

Beekeeping 101, Feb. 9, 6:30-8 p.m., $18/$25, GSC
Growing Perennial Edibles, Feb. 10, 6-8 p.m., $25/$35, BGP
Seed Starting Intensive, Feb. 13, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and Feb. 14; 10 a.m.-2 p.m., $90/$99, GSC
Starting With Baby Chicks, Feb. 20, 10 a.m.-noon, $25/$35, SJA
Harvest the Rain, Feb. 20, 10 a.m.-noon, $25/$40, GSC
All About Tools, Feb. 20, 1-3 p.m., $25/$35, GSC
Fruit Tree Pruning, Feb. 21, 10 a.m.-noon, $25/$35, GSC
Lawn to Lettuce, Feb. 21, 1-3 p.m., $25/$35, Wallingford area
Comprehensive Organic Gardener, Feb. 24-Mar. 17, $235/$275, GSC or BGP
Beekeeping 101, Feb. 25, 6:30-8 p.m., $18/$25, GSC
City Chickens 101, Feb. 27, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., $30/$40, GSC
Beekeeping 102: Starting Your Hive, Mar 2 and 18, 6-7:30 p.m., GSC
Be Cistern Savvy!, March 4, 6-7:30 p.m., $18/$25, BGP
Get Ready to Garden!, March 7, 1-3 p.m., $25/$35, GSC
Earth School Garden Tours, for school groups, March 9-June, Tuesday through Friday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., $5 per child/$85 minimum, GSC

Teaming With Parks, Tilth Offers Series at Community Centers

A series of one-hour classes held at city community centers will be offered by Seattle Tilth educators this spring as part of a collaboration with the Seattle Parks Department. The classes will be held on the four Saturdays in March at centers in the southeast section of the city.

To register, go to www.seattletilth.org and click on Learn.

Grow Good Food, Saturdays, March 6-27, 10-11 a.m., $60, Rainier Beach Community Center
Container Veggie Gardening, Saturdays, March 6-27, 11 a.m.-noon, $60, Van Asselt Community Center
Container Veggie Gardening, Saturdays, March 6-27, 1-2 p.m., $60, Jefferson Community Center
Grow Good Food, Saturdays, March 6-27, 1-2 p.m., $60, Rainier Community Center